

11 March 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: Colonel White

THROUGH : Mr. Lloyd

1. This Agency long has been engaged in a campaign to develop increased professionalism among its personnel. Increased emphasis upon training is one aspect of this campaign. The Career Service System for personnel management and establishment of the Career Staff are others. A chronic problem remains largely unsolved. It is the problem of weeding out employees adjudged to be only of marginal value. The problem itself is crystal clear and rather universally recognized. What to do about it and, more importantly, how to proceed, remains largely obscure.

2. It is well to recognize that except for instances of irresponsible management, i.e., supervisors, there is no problem in cases of gross incompetence, malfeasance, insubordination, etc. In such instances notice can be served, charges preferred, hearings held and separation effected. In other instances, also essentially black and white in character, separation can be effected by resort to the Director's authority as specified in Sec. 102(c) of P.L. 110.

3. The essential difficulty we are faced with is that the management problem represented by the "marginal" employee, as that descriptive term itself implies, is not a problem in black and white. It is the problem of dealing effectively, yet fairly, in many shades of gray. But even slight reflection makes the manager aware that most employees are in this same gray area. This is evidenced by the relatively small percentage of employees who, after initial ranking under a competitive promotion system, will be selected for promotion without serving a minimum time-in-grade. If these individuals can be characterized as the "whites" and those whose performance is so grossly inadequate as to support separation proceedings, the "blacks" what is needed is an administrative procedure for categorizing the "dark grays" who while leaving much to be desired are not so poor as to be disqualified for employment. Thus equipped for making finer effective decisions, managers can be expected to discharge the staffing aspects of their responsibility with greater discernment and discrimination and much less confusion and anguish.

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4. A means for accomplishing this seems to be largely at hand. Without any reorientation of basic policy and concept the Career Staff structure can be used to achieve this goal. Agency employment and membership in the CIA Career Staff are already distinguished in several respects. The most obvious of these is in the length of probation required before final acceptance. Less well known distinctions lie in the areas of medical, security, personal conduct, suitability and other criteria. Further, employees need not become members in the Career Staff as a condition of continued employment. In general these distinctions are those which are inherent (and become significant) when judgment is based upon the long range view rather than the short. And it is just this difference in view which is the very crux of the matter of dealing with the gray individuals who inevitably make up the great bulk of all personnel in this or any other agency. The individual whose performance in his present assignment is not so devoid of merit as to support a proceeding to remove him from employment and yet not of such quality as to make his long-continued employment desirable: -- he is our target. He is every manager's dilemma. Every supervisor wants to know what to do about him and how to do it.

5. A reasonable course of action in such cases would be to remove the individual from the Career Staff. This would serve to notify him that while he is not doing so poorly as to warrant ~~removal~~^{separation} neither is he performing so well as to be retained on any but short range considerations and that on either ground his continuance is more a matter of sufferance than of desire. Based upon what I have been told of the experience of the Selection Staff, Office of Personnel in cases of denial of membership in the Career Staff, most of these individuals could be expected to resign at their earliest convenience.

6. But even if a majority of these individuals did not resign as promptly as expected much of value would have been accomplished. First, personnel management and planning would be aided by elimination of such individuals from consideration under various career development programs including training, rotation, promotion, etc. Second, in the event a reduction in force should become necessary there would be available a group already identified for priority elimination. (This will be challenged on legal grounds, e.g., Veterans Preference Act, but backed by reasonable criteria for selection into the group and providing statutory due process for veterans in and relative to the group, it is believed that prior approval by the Civil Service Commission of this use of the group can be obtained.) Third, the individual would know where he stood and have a basis for planning his future course of action and the time to accomplish it in an orderly fashion.

7. The procedures by which this would be done seem to be these:

a. the supervisor notifies the individual of his recommendation at the time he forwards it through command channels to the Career Service Board having cognizance of the individual.

b. the Career Service Board forwards the recommendation and supporting facts together with its recommendations and such additional facts as it has adduced or considered, to the Selection Board.

c. the Selection Board would review the entire record and all recommendations and decide whether the individual should be removed from the Career Staff. The Selection Board would not be authorized to recommend removal from employment nor to consider any case in which such a recommendation was outstanding but not finally acted upon.

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8. Examination of the regulation governing the Career Staff of the CIA, [redacted] indicates that nothing proposed here is inconsistent with that regulation. Indeed [redacted] provides for separation from the Career Staff (a) automatically upon termination of employment, (b) by resignation of membership, subject to Board action, and (c) upon recommendation for removal. These actions are treated as matters of procedure in para 7.b. of the Regulation. However, both para 4 which states policy and para 6 which sets forth various responsibilities, including those of supervisors, are silent on the matter of removal from the Career Staff. Thus while some procedural provision is made for removal from the Career Staff, there is neither Agency policy on the subject nor is there any specification of responsibility or authority for initiating such action.

9. The problem considered here is certainly a real one. The administrative action suggested is believed to afford significant possibilities for at least partial solution to the problem. If you find merit in this very sketchy proposal, I suggest that Office of Personnel be asked to study it more thoroughly and make recommendations.

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